

U.S. Department of Justice

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NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the sentencing today of Robert Lee Neal, age 51, of Temple Hills, Maryland, and Francis D. Jones, also 51, of Fort Washington, Maryland, by the Honorable James C. Cacheris, United States District Judge, to 24 years (292 months) of incarceration. Neal and Jones, both former senior Pentagon officials, were sentenced for their participation in a massive bribery scheme. They were each also ordered to forfeit \$2 million. In arriving at the sentences, the Court found that the defendants received approximately \$1 million in bribes which caused over \$20 million in ill-gotten profits to certain small defense contracting firms.

As detailed in the attached prior press release, on July 10, 2003, an Alexandria jury convicted Neal and Jones of various corruption-related offenses.

From June 1996 through June 2001, Robert Neal served as the Director of the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization within the Office of Secretary of Defense. From this position, Neal directed policy and allocated multimillion dollar resources for DoD's acquisition preference programs for small and disadvantaged businesses. Francis Jones served as Neal's special assistant from May 1999 until January 19, 2001.

In execution of the forfeiture orders, the Court ordered the forfeiture of defendants' Rolex watches, homes, automobiles, stock in a savings and loan association, investment accounts, including \$19,000 in a foreign account in Liechtenstein. Jones also forfeited his interest in an \$867,000 note resulting from the sale of his business.

Mr. McNulty said: "These sentences tell the whole story. These defendants were entrusted with a mission to serve disadvantaged people and instead used their positions to serve themselves. This case involved a despicable breach of trust. Anyone tempted to make easy money by taking advantage of others in a similar manner should take a clear warning from today's sentences."

Joseph A. McMillan, Special Agent in Charge, Mid Atlantic Field Office, Defense Criminal Investigative Service stated: "The actions by the defendants in this corruption case had a chilling effect on the Pentagon's small and disadvantaged business acquisition community within the Washington DC area. Both defendants choose to cause harm to the very program that was established to aide minority and disadvantaged contractors. Their conduct overshadowed the excellent work which is performed on a daily basis by numerous individuals who hold similar positions of responsibility. These sentences will send a strong message that corruption in any form will be aggressively pursued when it comes to safeguarding Government programs from such egregious acts."

The investigation was conducted by special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service. Assistant United States Attorneys Matthew Friedrich and Stephen Learned prosecuted the case for the United States.

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